



Mathews County Public Schools

P.O. BOX 369
MATHEWS, VIRGINIA 23109

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

HARRY M. WARD
DIVISION SUPERINTENDENT
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July 28, 1999

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Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of:

Mathews County Public Schools, Virginia
Petition for Waiver of Urban
Designation in E-Rate Applications

CC Docket No. 96-45

In Accordance with 47 CFR 1.3, the Mathews County School Board requests waiver of the Federal Communications Commission Universal Service regulation 47 CFR 54.505 (b)(3)(i). Mathews County School Board requests reclassification as a rural community for the purpose of Universal Service, E-Rate discounts.

Mathews County, Virginia is located on the eastern tip of Virginia's Middle Peninsula, which is formed by the Rappahannock River, the York River and the Chesapeake Bay. The County is 80 miles from the state capital of Richmond, 65 miles from the Hampton Roads urban center and 155 miles from the nation's capital.

Access to the county is provided by only two roads. Both roads as well as the remainder of the county highways are two lanes with no traffic lights. Some areas in the county are only accessible via one-lane roads.

Consisting of 88.7 square miles of land and 16.3 square miles of water, the county is the smallest in the State of Virginia. Approximately 63% of Mathews County's total land area is privately owned commercial forest land. There are 61 farms in the county with an average size of 101 acres. Mathews County has large areas of wetlands and an inhabited island that are include in the Chesapeake Bay Act.

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Development in Mathews County has remained static due to the lack of traditional municipal services. Only a one-mile radius from the town center has sewer service. Water service and trash collection are not available for county residents and businesses. Fire protection and rescue services are provided by all-volunteer units. Economical High - Speed access to the Internet is not available due to the lack of Internet Service Provider (ISP), Phone Company and Cable Company infrastructure and competition.

The Mathews County School Board believes that the intent of the rural classification outlined in the E-Rate program was to provide additional funding to localities that do not benefit from the range of telecommunications services available in Urban areas. Geographic proximity to such Urban areas does not mean that these services are available, especially if large areas of water and long bridges provide economic barriers. This is certainly the case with Mathews County.

As indicated by the attached letter from Superintendent of Public Instruction, Paul D. Stapleton, the State of Virginia classifies Mathews County as a Rural Community. We ask the Commission to consider this petition and reclassify Mathews County, Virginia as rural for the purpose of Universal Service, E-rate funding.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry M. Ward", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature to the right.

Harry M. Ward
Division Superintendent

HMW:sfm

Attachment



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P. O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

PAUL D. STAPLETON
Superintendent of Public Instruction

July 8, 1999

Office: (804) 225-2023
Fax: (804) 371-2099
pstaplet@pen.k12.va.us

Mr. Harry M. Ward
Division Superintendent
Mathews County Public Schools
Route 14, Main Street
Mathews, Virginia 23109

Dear Harry:

It is my understanding that when your school division submitted its application for funding under the provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act – Universal Service Provision (e-rate), you learned that your county was classified as an urban area. This, of course, was a surprise to you as it is to us at the Department of Education. The Virginia Department of Education does consider Mathews County as one of its many rural counties.

By all standards, Mathews County is truly a rural county. Its population is approximately 9,000, there are only 1,400 students in the school system and it is about 52 miles from the nearest population centers (Newport News and Hampton). Many people in the county are employed in farming or as watermen, and the main village, Mathews, has a population of less than 2,000. Additionally, a lengthy bridge extends to the metropolitan area and county residents receive no city services.

This correspondence is in support of your application for reconsideration of Mathews County's status as urban by the Federal Communications Commission. We trust that they will accept Mathews as rural and re-classify accordingly. To further assist you in this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the official forms provided by the Federal Communication Commission to request that reconsideration.

Mr. Harry M. Ward
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If there is anything else that my staff or I can do to assist you in your request to have Mathews County properly categorized as a rural county, please do not hesitate to contact us. You, or officials considering your request for rural status, may reach me at (804) 225-2023 to discuss the matter. Also available to assist you are my Assistant Superintendent for Technology, Lan Neugent at (804) 225-2757, and our Universal Service Specialist, Greg Weisiger at (804) 692-0335.

I would be most appreciative if you would let us know the results of your appeal for reconsideration. I am certain that other school divisions in Virginia will be most interested in the decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul", enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Paul D. Stapleton
Superintendent of Public Instruction

PDS/GW/jt

Enclosure